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*Missions the Heart of Church Life.**

MY proposition is that missions are the heart of church life. I expect to demonstrate its truthfulness. I expect to prove that what the heart is to the body, an organizing and distributing organ, sending life, nerve force, and nutritive energy to every part, that missions are to the church—its very life and ground of being. In developing this proposition, we shall see that:

I. Missions are the heart of the Godhead.—Salvation for every man through the gospel, is the first great thought in the mind of God. Paul tells us that "to sum up all things in Christ," both things in heaven and things on earth, is God's eternal purpose. This is the—

"One far-off, divine event,
To which the whole creation moves."

Indeed, from the time God said to Abraham: "In thee and in thy seed shall *all families* of the earth be blessed," until he said, through the last of the prophets, "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my name shall be great

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among the Gentiles; and in *every place* incense shall be offered unto my name," this one great thought was so kept before the people as to admit no doubt that missions are the very heart of God.

In the New Testament we read that God is willing that *none* should perish, but willeth that *all* men should be saved; and that "God having raised up his servant, *sent* him to bless us in turning away *every one* of us from our iniquity."

Jesus was a missionary sent out by the Father, for he so describes himself: "I am come to do the will of him that *sent* me;" "God *sent* not his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the *world* through him might be saved."

Again Jesus says: "I will pray the Father and he shall *send* you another Comforter;" "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will *send* in my name, shall teach you all things." Paul tells us that "God *sent* forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts." So near are missions to the heart of God that he sent out two missionaries—his Son and the Holy Spirit! Until the gospel has been preached in all the nations, missions must be the very heart of God.

It is equally evident that missions must be the very heart of Him who said: "I and the Father are one." Certain it is that

the missionary idea dominated Christ's entire ministry. He describes himself as a shepherd who leaves the ninety and nine and goes to seek the one lost sheep. Wondrous love! Jesus would be a missionary if but one were lost! Moreover, Jesus himself selected, taught, trained and sent out twelve and seventy, eighty-two missionaries in three years! Stupendous work! Were not missionaries the very heart of Christ?

After his resurrection, he gave but one command to his followers. It was to go to all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. Here his followers and missions were joined in perpetual union. What the Lord thus joined, let no man put asunder.

His interest in missions did not cease with his ascension, for ere long, at the right hand of God exalted, he poured forth the Spirit in fulfilment of his promise, "If I go, I will *send* him unto you." So in heaven, Jesus joined the Father in sending out the Holy Spirit as a missionary.

After the ascension our Lord showed himself and spoke but once. What was his purpose that one time? To select one more man for missions, the cause which was upon his heart! "To this end have I appeared unto the, to appoint thee a minister and a witness. Depart: for I will send

thee far hence unto the Gentiles." Holy cause, and first in Jesus' heart, when he would interrupt the joy of heaven to call and commission a missionary! Missions are the very heart of Jesus Christ.

Missions are likewise the very heart of the Holy Spirit. We have seen that the Spirit is a missionary sent forth from heaven by the Father and Son. He is to abide here as a missionary forever. Not a step was taken toward the evangelization of the world by the apostolic church, except under the express direction of the Spirit. He it was who preached the first missionary sermon; for those who spoke on Pentecost spoke only as the Spirit gave them utterance. He it was who sent Philip to preach to the Ethiopian, and Peter to Cornelius. At his command the church at Antioch set apart Barnabas and Saul as missionaries, the Spirit affirming that he had called them for that very work. "So they, being *sent forth by the Holy Spirit*, went down to Seleucia;" nor would he permit Paul to preach in Asia or Mysia, but forbidding him to labor in those provinces, he directed his course to the great heathen continent of Europe.

Thus the Spirit brooded over the first Christian missionaries, and in person directed their labors; and through the missionary enterprise of the Spirit, himself a

missionary, we are all baptized into the "one body." Without doubt, missions are the very heart, not only of the Spirit, but of the entire Godhead.

II. Missions were the heart of the apostolic church. We have seen that missions are the very heart of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Those in the apostolic church were declared to be "partakers of the divine nature." Missions must, therefore, have been first with them. Indeed, the church had nothing to do until she heeded the command, "Go, preach," and will have nothing to do when she ceases heeding it. The Holy Spirit at the very start made her a missionary organization, and that she must remain, if she remains at all.

Christ came to seek and save the whole lost world, but did not stay in the flesh long enough to carry the good news to every creature. *That his unfinished work might be carried on to completion, Jesus organized the church.* She is the present visible Christ or manifestation of divine life among us; *she exists to do only what he would be doing if he were still flesh and dwelling among us;* she is the divine agency for carrying on what is in the divine mind. Now, the chief thought of the divine mind is the salvation of the entire human race. Therefore, the chief work of the church is the evangelization of the whole world.

"To rescue souls forlorn and lost,
The troubled, tempted, tempest tos't;
To heal, to comfort, and to teach
The fiery tongues of Pentecost
Their symbols were, that they should preach
In every form of human speech,
From continent to continent."

Strange, it seems, that those Spirit-filled men did not go out from Jerusalem at once, after Pentecost, to evangelize the world; stranger that, for six years, they did not preach beyond sight of Herod's temple. The church had forgotten, or had not learned her duty; and, because neither the command compelled nor love constrained her to go to the lost, God had to adopt some sterner means of making her be "about her Father's business."

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps on the sea,
And rides upon the storm."

This time he rode upon a whirlwind of persecution, which smote the non-missionary church in Jerusalem. And happily, "They that were scattered abroad went about preaching the Word." A new era had come! The woman had at last lighted a lamp, taken her broom and commenced sweeping to find the lost coin! Then "Philip went down into the city of Samaria and proclaimed unto them the Christ." *Under the express direction of the Spirit, he*

made a missionary journey to turn one man to the Lord; after this he was a missionary in all the cities from Azotus to Cæsarea.

Four years later Peter knew that "God is no respecter of persons;" and that, through him as a missionary, "God had granted unto the Gentiles, also, repentance unto life."

And how shall we describe the indescribable, the missionary labors of Paul? Glorying in the cross; knowing naught but the crucified; requesting prayers that he, with boldness, might make known the mystery of God in Christ Jesus; desiring to build on no other man's foundation, his aim being to preach only where Christ had not been named; seeing visions of men beseeching him to come and help them; and, in response, hurrying from city to city, province to province, continent to continent, yearning to preach in Rome and then in Spain; enduring labor, prison, stripes, beatings, stoning and shipwreck; suffering from his anxious "care of all the churches," from hunger, thirst, cold, heat, nakedness; yet, telling us that none of these things moved him from the steadfast purpose of his heart to preach in the great regions beyond; spending and being spent for the sake of souls; burned and consumed in spreading gospel light, as the carbon in the arc-lamp consumes itself in dispelling dark-

ness; and, in a divine passion for souls, wishing himself anathema from Christ for his brethren's sake!

Nothing could daunt or deter the apostles; the whole church was a vast missionary organization: "Every convert a preacher, every proselyte a propagandist, every congregation a training school for missionaries and a missionary light-house."

They believed that "All are to go, and to go to all;" that *to cease to go, is to cease to grow.* And being big with the love of God and compassion for their fellow men, "They went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the work by signs that followed." Without doubt missions were the heart of the apostolic church.

III. That missions are the heart of the church-life is evident in church history.—The spirit of missions was the heritage of the church immediately foliowing the apostolic age. Rapid, triumphant, wonderful, was her march against false systems. With no force save the constraining force of love in the gospel; with no riches save the wealth of His grace; refusing the patronage of great men, scorning covenant and compromise, preferring combat and conquest, it was but few years till she undermined the whole vast structure of heathenism, so that at the end of the fourth century the

Roman Empire was nominally Christian, and paganism practically extinct.

But shortly she began to feel that she had need of nothing, was rich and in goods increased. She made covenants instead of conquests. The "Bride of Christ" became the "harlot" of wealth, worldliness, and temporal power. Being untrue to the Bridegroom, she ceased to "Go." She became corrupt and degenerate through heathen practices, which were at first tolerated, then endured and embraced. Thus the church, a pure, swift-flowing, life-giving stream became a filthy, noisome cesspool.

When the world so far forgot God that even he despaired of saving it, he gave it over to the deluge, and but a remnant, "eight souls were saved by water." When the heart of the church became so deceitful and desperately wicked that she ceased to go abroad with the gospel, the very thing for which she was brought forth, God gave her over to the sword of the Saracens, and her remnant was saved as a brand from the burning—"saved as by fire."

The churches of North Africa lost their missionary zeal, and God swept them from the earth. Similar was the fate of those in Arabia, Palestine and Asia Minor. The besom of destruction swept away the churches planted by Paul, and their meet-

ing houses became mosques and places of prayer for followers of the false prophet. Herein is a lesson. *The church must go to the lost, or go to oblivion and death;* "extension or extinction" are the only alternatives.

"Heaven's gate is shut on him who comes a one;
Save thou a soul, and thou shalt save thine own."

When the church lost her missionary spirit the dark ages set in. For a thousand years the papal anti-Christ gave no command to go. Christ said "Go," but the Pope said "No." For at least five hundred years nothing was done to extend the kingdom of God; and the un-christian, non-missionary, paganized, papal church lost ground. When the heart is strong and healthful, and the various physical organs active, the life-giving blood is driven out strongly, even to the extremes of the body. There is a glow of health and joy in labor. But when the heart is weak and flabby, circulation is poor, and the non-nourished body invites disease and death. Now, missions are the heart of the church life. When this heart is strong and active, and sends out the life-giving gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth, she will be both edified and multiplied; but when this heart is weak and sluggish, and missionary activity declines, the body of Christ, the church, is "sick unto death."

During these dark non-missionary ages

the church was not inert. She had her activities, but they mark a fall from heaven to hell. She sent out missionaries a million strong; not to rescue souls and retake the world for Christ, but simply to wrench Palestine from the "infidel Turk!" Souls might go, if the church could secure the "Holy City" and the "Holy Sepulcher!" Gigantic enterprises, these crusades, and prosecuted with immense treasure and loss of life. They teach us that defeat and humiliation await the church when she engages in any but the Master's work, or in any but the Master's spirit.

There was one other activity during this non-missionary age. It came to destroy men's lives, not to save. It was "blasphemously miscalled the 'Holy Office' or 'Inquisition.'" In its milder phases, it dealt with the individual whom they "crowned as heresiarch, with painted devils on his cap, or cropped his ears, or slit his nose, branded him with hot irons, or broke him on the wheel, or stretched him on the rack, or hung him with a strappado, or blew him up to bursting with a bellows, or roasted him over a slow fire" In its severer form it dealt with tribes or nations, and the so-called "Vicegerent of the Prince of Peace," the Pope demonstrated his descent from the devil by the command he gave. Christ said: "Go,

preach;" but the Pope said: "Go, kill." "But," demurred his minions, "In the whole nation there may be a few faithful. How shall we know and spare them?" "Go," roared the Pope, "Go, kill all! The Lord will know his own!" Activity is a law of church life; if not active in the Lord's work, still active, even though in the devil's; and when not engaged in gathering, then engaged in scattering.

When the Reformation dawned, unfortunately for both church and world, the zeal of the reformers in general was polemic and not evangelistic. They battled over creed and dogma, but let souls go. The reformed churches cared nothing and did nothing for missions; and all their missionaries for two hundred years or more may be counted on the fingers of one hand.

The result of their home-staying and discussion was division, sub-division into sect and minor sect; then biting, devouring, and every evil work, till the movement was shorn of its power and was largely self-consumed.

"A millstone and the human heart are ever driven round;
If they have nothing else to grind, they must themselves be ground."

IV. That missions are the heart of church life is still further shown in the fact that the blight and curse of God appear to rest upon

non-missionary churches. For instance, until near the close of the eighteenth century, Protestant England was stone-blind to the duty, privilege and opportunity of world-wide evangelization. Consider the state of her church life. Preachers cut short the Sunday sermon to attend a fox-chase; some of them drank to excess; some swore and gambled like pirates, and they were generally unclean in thought, word and life. Blackstone visited all the leading churches of London, and "could discover no more Christianity in the sermons than in the writings of Cicero or Seneca." Isaac Taylor said that England was in virtual heathenism, with a lascivious literature, an infidel society, a worldly church and a deistic theology. "To cease being evangelistic is to cease being evangelical," was fully proved in the Anglican Church of this period; for *to cease to send is to cease to mend.*

In America darkness covered the land, and gross darkness the people. Piety lay dead, and Pity shed no tears at the funeral. "There was an awful dearth of conversions;" immorality and infidelity were frightfully common; the church and Christianity of the time were made a common butt of ridicule; and it was thought that if the world could be rid of all religion, peace, joy and prosperity would at once abound.

The Lord was no longer with the degenerate, unmissionary church, for the promise, "Lo, I am with you," is conditioned upon the going: "Lo, I am with you," *as you go*, is the proper interpretation.

No anti-mission, or o-mission church can rightly claim that promise, for it has failed to observe the condition. All such are doomed to a rude awakening or a slow death.

V. That missions are the heart of church life may be seen in the experience of the various denominations, or that of single congregations. A glance at the churches will show that they, like nations, are either "living or dying;" and that *in exact ratio with their missionary operations, they are living or dying:* if missionary, then living; if non-missionary, then diseased and dying.

The Unitarians and Universalists are non-missionary peoples. They have made no substantial gains in years. The Primitive, or Old School Baptists are anti-missionary. They were once about as numerous as the regular Baptists, a great missionary people, but are now not more than one-fiftieth as strong. The missionary Baptists are living; the anti-missionary Baptists are dying. *Send or end are the only alternatives.*

Missions were the heart of life in Spurgeon's great congregation. It has been "A center of evangelizing influence; the

mother of churches, schools, missions, preaching stations, orphanages, and almshouses; it has trained thousands of young men to preach the gospel; it has sent out more missionaries than any single congregation in the world. Because it scatters, it increases."

A striking contrast is the history of the Brooklyn tabernacle, where Talmage ministered so long. His was an o-mission church, giving almost nothing for the spread of the gospel. It was weighed and found wanting. Even the long-suffering, merciful Lord could endure it no more, and so spewed it out of his mouth! Surely *extend or end* is the law of church life.

And what need I say more to show the results of missions and o-missions, either at home or abroad? Is it not plain that we need missions for "extension, intension, attention, retention, and every tension but pretension;" and that "*missions are the heart of church life?*"

VI. The truth of my proposition is still further made evident by the fact that, since the beginning of the "era of modern missions," a hundred years ago, the church has made more progress than in the preceding twelve hundred years. In the number of lands occupied by Christian workers; the extent of territory embraced; the number of translations made of the Bible; the

number of people made accessible to the gospel; and the number actually added to the church, the last hundred years, this splendid era of modern missions, is the time of Christianity's greatest triumphs since the days of Paul. Thus we see that the great victories won "For Christ and the Church" are the victories of missions.

Finally, because missions are the heart of church life, I would remark that missions must have a larger place in pulpit, press and college. The preacher, editor and professor must teach more and more that this is our *chief business*. When uniting with the church it should be made clear to all persons that they are joining a missionary society. As the coin answers exactly to the die which strikes it, so does a convert generally to the spirit of the church where he turned to the Lord. It should be made clear that the great commission is binding upon every one in the church. Let us have robust teaching, giving and working. Make the whole church feel that if missions are not made of first importance God's gracious designs cannot be carried out. *Use or lose.* Use all your opportunities and powers or lose every privilege and blessing, is the Lord's message to the church.

If this is done, ere long there will be a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, wherein every knee shall bow to Him and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Then will heaven rejoice over this renewed earth. Then shall go up the great and final shout of victory, "Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."